



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 3 GARDE ROAD SONNING



**Prepared for:
Mr E Hamed
3 Garde Road
Sonning
Reading
RG4 6XJ**

9 September 2025

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This report is valid for 12 months from the site inspection. The lifespan of this report may be subject to change if the site conditions change due to unspecified works that affect the site.



Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr E Hamed to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]) of 3 Garde Road, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6XJ. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 2 September 2025 at 1.15pm, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property took place to look for signs of bats.

The DBW consists of a desk top study prior to the survey to review existing information about the site and its surroundings and to inform the design of subsequent bat surveys, if required. The desk top study was conducted based upon a minimum 2km search radius and it revealed that two statutory designated sites are located within, and three current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats has been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The landform to the east and south of the site is suitable for roosting, commuting or foraging bats and provides diverse habitats suitable for a wide range of bat species.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the property for bats, signs of bats and features suitable for use by roosting bats. This includes droppings, scratch marks, rubbing and staining at exit holes, live or dead bats and other features such as missing tiles, this list is not exhaustive.

The properties suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features identified during the preliminary inspection. The property is in a good to fair condition internally and externally however, there are moved/missing hanging tiles and moved/raised roof tiles and missing mortar in verges which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats or provide access into the building for bats, and the presence or absence of bats could not be determined without further survey effort. In line with best practice guidelines, the building was assessed as having low potential¹ to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines², one separate dusk emergence survey is required on the property in order to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats. If bats are recorded emerging from the building during the survey, two further activity surveys and an EPSL will be required in order for the development to proceed legally.

¹ Table 4.1 Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition.

² Collins, J. (ed) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition).



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr E Hamed to conduct a DBW of 3 Garde Road, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6XJ. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The DBW is designed to:

- Identify the presence/likely absence of bats within the building.
- Provide information on previous bat ecological surveys/reports.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the building currently or previously.
- To add confidence where no bats are found, or to categorise the nature of a roost where evidence of bats are found.
- To establish whether further surveys, mitigation or an EPSL is required.

The DBW and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition.

1.3 Proposed Works

The survey was commissioned in connection with a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council the full details of which were unknown at the time of writing this report but are likely to include roof removal and other alterations.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats was completed by Nick Powell and the report was written by Simon Holmes MSc CEnv.

Nick holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-11742) and has been surveying bats for 3 years with various ecological consultancies and has received training in surveying techniques, bat detector use, bat biology, identification, acoustic monitoring, echolocation analysis and netting.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI64844). He has 35 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work.

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

2.1 Legislative Background

All species of British bat are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Under this legislation it is an offence to kill or injure a bat or interfere with any roosting or resting site. A bat roost is interpreted as "*any structure or place used for shelter or protection*" whether or not bats are present at the time. A summary of the main legislation and planning considerations are included at Appendix 1.



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Seven species of bat are also Species of Principal Importance for nature conservation in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This places a duty on all government departments to have regard for the conservation of these species and on the Secretary of State to further, or promote others to further, the conservation of these species.

3. Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU76287518, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 3 Garde Road, Sonning, highlighted.

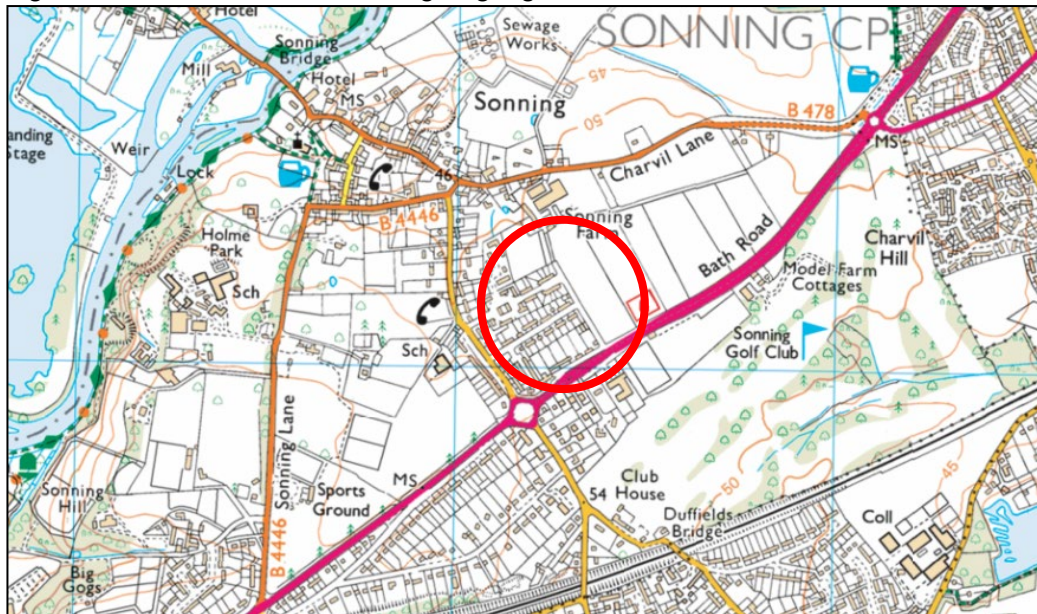
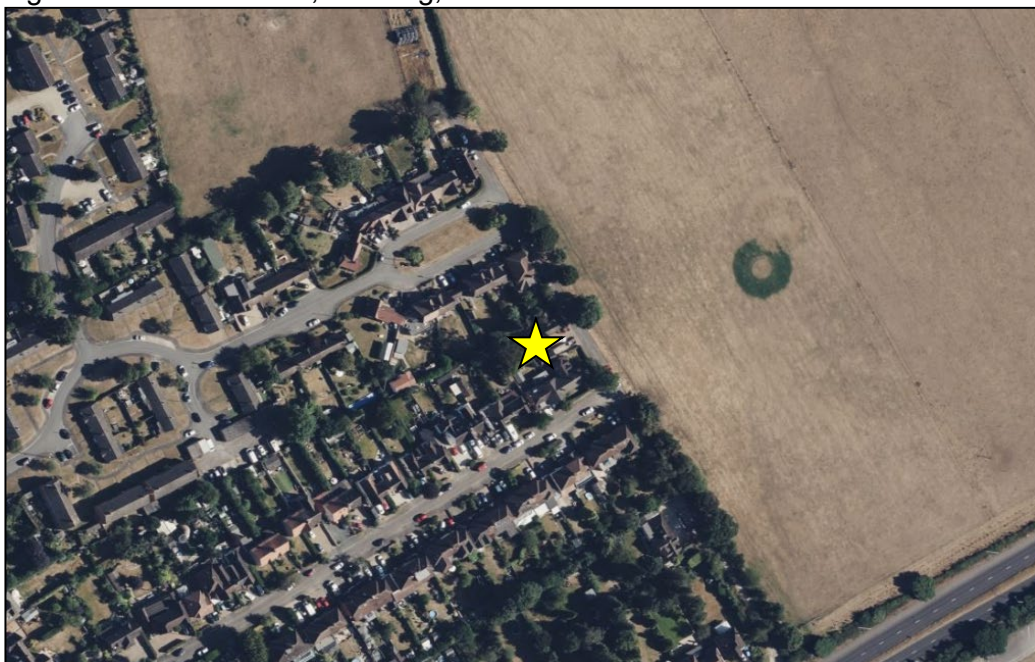


Figure 2. 3 Garde Road, Sonning, overview of the immediate area.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built property with integral garage and paved driveway/parking area, lawn and shrubs at the front, see cover photograph. The rear garden mainly consists of perennial weeds with remnants of herbaceous plants, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers limited foraging and commuting habitat for bats however there is direct ecological connectivity to the wider landscape that provides good habitat for foraging and roosting bats.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 3 Garde Road, Sonning. 02.09.25



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

Google Earth and MAGIC maps (magic.defra.gov.uk) websites were used prior to the survey to determine the suitability of the surrounding habitat to support roosting bats and to identify any statutory designated sites or EPSLs within 2km of the site. Due to the scale of the proposed development, and the very local impact that may occur, no data was sought from the local records centre at this time.

The property is situated in the village of Sonning, to the east of Reading with properties and gardens of varying styles and sizes to the north, south and west. Directly to the east are agricultural fields and improved grassland with, over the A4 Bath Road Sonning Golf Club and to the south, the tree lined main line railway. Further afield to the west is the improved grassland associated with Reading Hockey Club, Berkshire County Sport Club, Sonning Lawn Tennis Club and Sonning Recreation Ground which connect via tree lined roads and fields to the River Thames and Caversham Lakes/Sonning Marina. All these areas are within commuting distance for bats and provide good foraging habitat for a wide range of bats species.



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Alder Moors Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Ali's Pond LNR lie within 2km of the site however there is only ecological connectivity to Ali's Pond LNR. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed that three current EPSLs for bats have been granted within 2km of the site, the details of which are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Current EPSLs for bats within 2km of the site

EPSL reference	Licence end date	Species on licence
2020-48093-EPS-MIT	02/2026	Common and soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared
2020-48353-EPS-MIT	02/2026	Soprano pipistrelle
2020-48694-EPS-MIT	12/2025	Common and soprano pipistrelle

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 3 Garde Road, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6XJ was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 2 September 2025 at 1.15pm. The weather conditions for the survey were overcast with a temperature of 16.4 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole and a ladder.

During the DBW an external and internal inspection of the property was carried out to identify any signs of occupation by bats and features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines. Features investigated included:

- Construction of the building – soffits, loft space, tiles/slates, lead flashings etc.
- Building condition – structure of roof and walls.
- Internal conditions – microclimate stability, draughts etc.
- Access points – potential entry and exit points for bats.
- Roosting points – cracks and crevices, between underlay and roofing tiles/slates.

Field signs that would indicate the presence of bats were searched for. These included:

- Bat droppings on the floor and walls of the building.
- Feeding remains (particularly butterfly and moth wings).
- Evidence of urine and/or oily staining around possible roost entrances.
- Presence of areas cleared of cobwebs.
- Where a breathable roofing membrane has been fitted staining on the membrane may suggest use by bats.
- Odour can sometimes suggest the present of bats.
- Squeaking and chattering can reveal bats roosting between the tiles and roofing underlay.

Buildings or structures that were not to be affected by the current proposals or with no bat roosting potential were not inspected.

4.3 Constraints

Access to the site during the visit was made possible by the tenant. A thorough inspection of the main loft space could not be undertaken due to the deep insulation and lack of boarding. The surveyor was advised by the tenant not to enter the cupboard access to the loft space over the front extension due to 'weak' ceilings.



5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property were examined for signs described in section 4.2. Windowsills, exposed features around the windows, fascias and walls were inspected for any evidence of bat droppings or staining.

The property is a detached, chalet style, brick-built building with single storey front extension and integral garage. The pitched roofs are covered in tiles, the majority of which are close fitting however, on the rear, some tiles have moved leaving gaps that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species, see Figure 4 below. There is no missing mortar from the ridge tiles, (see Figure 5 on page 9) however there is missing mortar from the front and rear verges which could afford roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling bats, see Figure 6 on page 9. The front gable elevations are covered in hanging tiles, some of which have moved and a couple of which are missing and, the gaps could be used by roosting bats, see Figure 7 on page 10. The soffits and fascias are tight to the wall with no gaps that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species, see Figure 8 on page 10. There is a dormer window on the northern elevation, the flat roof of which is covered in well fitted bitumen felt (see Figure 9 on page 11) and the sides of which are covered in hanging tiles, all of which are well fitted with no gaps, see Figure 10 on page 11.

No bats or evidence of bats were recorded during the external inspection of the property although there are various features on the property that provide potential crevice roosting opportunities for bats and the presence or absence of bats could not be established.

Figure 4. Examples moved roof tiles. 3 Garde Road, Sonning. 02.09.25





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Figure 5. Example sealed ridge tiles. 3 Garde Road, Sonning. 02.09.25



Figure 6. Example missing mortar in verges. 3 Garde Road, Sonning. 02.09.25





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Figure 7. Example missing and moved hanging tiles. 3 Garde Road, Sonning. 02.09.25



Figure 8. Example sealed soffits and fascias. 3 Garde Road, Sonning. 02.09.25





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Figure 9. Bitumen covering dormer roof. 3 Garde Road, Sonning. 02.09.25



Figure 10. Example moved hanging tiles on dormer. 3 Garde Road, Sonning. 02.09.25





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5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the property was undertaken and examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

There are two loft spaces within the property. The space above the front extension was access via an eaves cupboard. The loft space was not lit, not boarded and is insulated, see Figure 11 below. The space in the main property was access via a loft hatch, this space was also not lit, not boarded and insulated, see Figure 12 below. The roof tiles in both lofts are lined with bitumen felt, all of which that could be seen appeared to be in a good condition.

Due to the lack of boarding and deep insulation a thorough inspection of both loft spaces could not be conducted.



Figure 11.
Example loft
space above
extension. 3
Garde Road,
Sonning.
02.09.25



Figure 12.
Example main
loft space. 3
Garde Road,
Sonning.
02.09.25



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6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the site have been assessed with reference to the following criteria and include seasonal variation where increased or decreased probability may arise. Where features are present, they are **highlighted in bold**.

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be higher where structures:

- are of a pre-20th Century construction;
- are in a lowland rural setting;
- **have woodland, mature trees, species-rich grassland and/or water nearby;**
- have large dimension roof timbers with cracks, joints and holes;
- have numerous crevices in stonework and structures;
- **have an uneven roof covering with gaps, though not too draughty;**
- **have hanging tiles** or roof cladding, especially on south-facing walls;
- **have a roof warmed by the sun;**
- are disused or little used; largely undisturbed;
- provide appropriate hibernation conditions, such as abandoned mines, tunnels, kilns, or fortifications; or
- **Recent and historical records of bat roosts in the general area.**

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be lower where structures:

- **are in an urban setting** with little green space;
- are subject to heavy disturbance (constant movement due to draughts and noise, also unstable microclimate);
- have a small, cluttered roof void (particularly for brown long-eared);
- **are of a modern construction with few gaps or crevices that bats can fly or crawl through (though pipistrelle bats may still be present);**
- are comprised of prefabricated steel or sheet materials; (some sections);
- are active industrial premises.

Please note that the list above provides generic screening criteria only and there are exceptions to consider.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Interpretation

The property is in a good to fair condition internally and externally. The moved/missing hanging tiles and moved/raised roof tiles and missing mortar in verges provide crevice-like features suitable for bats to roost and may also provide access into the loft space and we are unable to determine the presence or absence of bats in the building without further survey effort. When the findings from the site inspection are combined with the desk top study the property is classified as having a low potential to support roosting bats.

Based on the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, one dusk emergence survey must be undertaken on the property, between May and August, to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats and in order to inform appropriate mitigation for the proposed works if necessary. The features identified will require three survey positions, all equipped with bat detectors and night vision cameras in order to cover the potential bat roosting features. If bats are recorded emerging from the building during the survey, two further activity surveys and an EPSL will be required in order for the development to proceed legally.



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7.2 Contingency Plan

If, for whatever reason, there is a time delay of greater than 12 months between this survey and the commencement of work, then the survey should be repeated as the condition of the building may change and the site may become more suitable to support roosting bats.

8. References

Collins, J (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

HM Government (2017) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations as (amended).

HM Government (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended).

HM Government (2006) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.

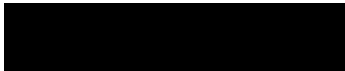
Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). Bat Workers' Manual (3rd Edition). Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

9. Queries

Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

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APPENDIX 1

In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of bats to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating bats, to hibernate or migrate.
- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Planning Considerations:

Government guidance to Local Planning Authorities stipulates the need to consider biodiversity and protected species during the consideration of planning applications. The NPPF makes clear that the planning system should help minimise the impacts that development can have on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. In addition, the ODPM Circular 04/2005 states *“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision”*.

Policy CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (planning policy relating to the site) states *“Development which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and*

- i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
- ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided”*.

Developments that compromise the protection afforded to bats or roosts under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 will require a European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England (NE).

NE, the government’s statutory conservation advisory organisation, is responsible for issuing EPS licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations.

Three tests must be satisfied before this licence (to permit otherwise prohibited acts) can be issued:

- Reg 44(2)(e) – the derogation is “in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”.
- Reg 44(3)(a) – there is “no satisfactory alternative” to the derogation.
- Reg 44(3)(b) –the derogation is “not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range”.

Tests (a) and (e) can be met with the issue of planning permission for the proposed works. Test (b) is determined by NE’s ecology department that requires the development of a suitable mitigation strategy that would ensure that any bats present on site, are retained at the same population level or better.